



DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

News Release

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DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES CALLS FOR END TO LEGISLATIVE RESTRICTION ON FEDERAL FUNDS FOR NEEDY FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

HONOLULU — The Lingle-Aiona Administration is asking the Legislature to lift a \$35 million restriction placed on a federal block grant that provides assistance to needy families and children. The 2007 supplemental budget request calls for the Legislature to restore the full \$98.9 million Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant given each year to the Department of Human Services (DHS) by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

In the 2005 Legislative session, the Legislature passed a law that allotted only \$63.9 million from the \$98.9 million TANF block grant each year, for 2006 and 2007. Prior to that law, the Department of Human Services, since 1997, was receiving the full amount of the TANF federal funds.

The \$35 million restricted by the Legislature for fiscal year 2006 will lose its flexibility in September 2006 and increase the state's TANF reserve that has already grown to more than \$113 million as of September 2005. These TANF reserve funds can only be used for cash to individuals on government assistance, and can no longer be flexibly used on child care, job training and other self-sufficiency, youth and family strengthening programs.

"By lifting the restriction on this money for 2007, we will expand Hawaii's capacity to provide more front-end services that prevent families from going into poverty and improve their self-sufficiency," Lieutenant Governor James R. "Duke" Aiona, Jr. said. "Since December 2003, we have put TANF money to good use, funding youth and family strengthening and self-sufficiency services that are making a real difference in the lives of families and children."

The Department of Human Services contracted for more than \$28 million in new and expanded positive youth development and family strengthening programs statewide in the past two years. Some of the new services funded include Lt. Governor Aiona's Hawaii Drug Control Strategy prevention programs, the Youth Advocacy Program (YAP) providing intensive mentoring for

teenagers to help them avoid incarceration or foster care, About Face! providing job experience and life skills to disadvantaged youth, and the Supporting Employment Empowerment (SEE) program, a new employment service that helps businesses meet their growing labor demands while providing additional work opportunities for individuals on government assistance.

The Department of Human Services also expanded many well-established positive youth development and family strengthening programs that customarily receive state funding to free-up state funds for more expansion or other needed services. Some of this leveraging of federal funds in state-funded programs includes the TANF funds that the Department of Human Services is now providing to Catholic Charities and the Institute of Human Services for programs to help homeless families as well as other youth and family strengthening programs from the Salvation Army, numerous Boys and Girls Club sites across the state, Parents and Children Together (PACT), Healthy Start, Hale Kipa, Kokua Kalihi Valley, YWCA, Hina Mauka, Goodwill Industries of Hawaii and the Legal Aid Society of Hawaii.

“We are proud of the work we’ve done so far to provide new and expanded programs that are helping children and families make healthy choices and break the cycle of poverty,” said DHS Director Lillian Koller. “This amendment will allow us to maximize the TANF federal funds each year and continue our efforts to fight poverty using a variety of strategies.”

Director Koller also signed a memorandum of agreement that will allow the Commission on Fatherhood, an agency that was recently attached to the Department of Human Services, to receive TANF funds for programs that promote fatherhood and increase the capacity of fathers to provide emotional and financial support for their children.

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